

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Booker T. Washington High School

Other names/site number: Booker T. Washington School High School for Coloreds,  
Booker T. Washington Community Center; VDHR File No. 132-5011

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 1114 West Johnson Street

City or town: Staunton State: VA County: N/A

Not For Publication: N/A

Vicinity: N/A

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

     national      statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A      B X C      D

**Signature of certifying official/Title:**

**Date**

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

**State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

Booker T. Washington High School  
Name of Property

Staunton, VA  
County and State

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- \_\_\_ entered in the National Register  
\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☐  
Public – Local ☒  
Public – State ☐  
Public – Federal ☐

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒  
District ☐  
Site ☐

Booker T. Washington High School  
Name of Property

Staunton, VA  
County and State

Structure

☐

Object

☐

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

0

buildings

0

0

sites

0

1

structures

0

0

objects

1

1

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: School

---

---

---

---

---

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION & CULTURE: Auditorium, Sports Facility, Museum

---

---

---

---

---

Booker T. Washington High School  
Name of Property

Staunton, VA  
County and State

---

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; CONCRETE; WOOD; METAL:  
Steel, Aluminum

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

---

### Summary Paragraph

The Booker T. Washington High School was constructed in 1936 in a notable example of the Art Deco style as designed by architect Raymond V. Long. It is a rectangular two-story, flat roof, brick building that is 123 feet long and 57 feet wide. The north end elevation is the façade of the school and contains its main entrance. The east (long) elevation consists of four bays, each containing three windows while the west elevation contains the gymnasium wing. A four-bay, 80-foot-long addition was put on the south end of the school in 1960. The building interior is organized along a double-loaded corridor. Originally there were stairs at each end of the corridor, but the south stair was eliminated at the time of the 1960 addition to allow the corridor to be extended. The corridors in the original section of the building have a wainscot of yellow glazed masonry blocks. The classrooms in the original section have plaster walls. The wood trim in these rooms creates much of their historic character with door and transom casings, a chair rail and wood base, along with built-in storage cabinets.

The school retains a high level of design integrity with the following exceptions. Exterior alterations include replacing the windows in both the original school and the addition with one-over-one double-sash aluminum types surrounded by EIFS (exterior insulation finishing system).

Booker T. Washington High School

Staunton, VA

Name of Property

County and State

Also from 1967 to 1986, the Staunton Police Department occupied the first floor of the school and made some alterations. Most of these changes were later removed and there are enough original spaces and fabric to restore this level as it was constructed. Today, the property includes the school (contributing building), late 1970s basketball courts (noncontributing structure), and a series of parking areas.

---

## Narrative Description

### Setting

The school is sited on a 2.3-acre sloping parcel and is surrounded by the West Johnson Street neighborhood that overlooks Staunton's historic downtown and the Blue Ridge Mountains beyond. There are parking areas beyond the east, west, and south sides of the building and there are basketball courts (noncontributing structure) beyond the east lot. The east parking lot and the courts were installed in the late 1970s after the school had closed and replaced terraced lawns. A limestone wall capped with a chain link fence defines this east edge of the site. An additional lot at the corner of Johnson and Richardson streets and across the street from the school is a part of the school parcel and was the first lot purchased by the school board in this area. It is unknown why this parcel was purchased in 1915, twenty years before the other lots were purchased and construction began. It currently is a vacant lot used as a playground with a plastic play-set located on it.

### Exterior

The former Booker T. Washington High School is a two-story, brick building resting on a poured concrete foundation. The original school is a notable Art Deco design and was constructed in 1936 at the cost of approximately \$75,000. The dimensions of the school are approximately 123 feet long and 57 feet wide. In 1960 an addition was added to the south end of the original school that extended the building 80 feet. A flat roof exists behind the brick parapets and currently is a single ply EPDM (ethylene propylene diene terpolymer) membrane.

The school's unusual brickwork features a three-course stretcher bond pattern with a Flemish bond fourth course with glazed headers. A soldier header course caps the windows above the second level. The original section consists of four bays on the long (east) side and flat pilaster-like projecting piers separate these divisions. Art Deco-inspired projecting and recessed cast stone panels cap these pilaster-like piers.

The front (north) three-bay elevation contains a central bay with a large, six-paned replacement aluminum window and frame located above the main entrance. Stacked stretcher bricks surround this window and a soldier course of stretchers ends this composition over a recessed entrance which contains a pair of flush-steel replacement doors set in aluminum frames with narrow sidelights.

Projecting cast-stone faceted panels with decorative floral motifs cap this entrance bay above the window. Projecting flat pilaster-like brick elements support the decorative cast panels. The bays on either side of the central entrance feature stacked stretcher-bond brick panels surrounded by

Booker T. Washington High School

Staunton, VA

Name of Property

County and State

two rows of headers with cast-stone square panels at each corner. The end piers of each side bay terminate in faceted Art Deco capitals. The parapet walls terminate with a cast-stone cap and the windowsills, too, are cast stone.

The gymnasium projects from the west side of the main block on the upper level of the school and is built into the sloped site. The exterior of the gymnasium continues the design of the main section of the building with the same brick coursing and soldier row of stretchers above the windows. The rear exits of the gymnasium are capped with distinctive hipped metal-roofed overhangs supported on painted wood brackets. The gymnasium's north and south walls have three regularly spaced windows with replacement sash, while the west wall is devoid of fenestration.

The main block's east (long) elevation consists of four bays, each containing three windows. The original window sash have been recently removed and replaced with double-hung aluminum window sash with thermal glass. Based on photographs, the original windows were steel-sash with a combination of hopper, awning, and double-hung operation. Their reported condition was poor at the time of their replacement. The original window openings were reduced in size using EIFS (exterior insulation finishing system) to fill portions of the openings; however, their original size is still apparent. On the west side of the main block, the eight windows (four on each story) have been completely filled in with EIFS.

The 1960 rear addition extends the main block of the building to the south and its design departs from the Art Deco in favor of a more Modernist aesthetic. Its brickwork consists of five courses of stretchers separated by one course of Flemish bond but the headers are not glazed like those on the original school. Originally this two-bay addition consisted of seven sets of windows in each bay. Each window had five horizontally proportioned lights with the bottom one being of an operable hopper design. From historic photographs, it appears that flat-metal panels separated the two stories of windows in this wing. The original two-bay design has been altered by the replacement of the original horizontal window banks with smaller individual double-hung aluminum windows and an EIFS infill. The addition terminates at the south end of the east elevation with a projecting unadorned brick chimney tied into a furnace at the lower level. The south-end elevation wall contains a one-story, flat-roof, projecting entrance bay with a recessed flush-steel door and a second-floor replacement one-over-one double-sash window surrounded by EIFS.

The recessed hyphen connecting the two sections of the school is part of the 1960 addition and its east elevation contains a secondary entrance to the first floor of the building. It has a flat projecting concrete roof over the entrance that now contains a pair of flush-steel replacement doors next to a flat panel of EIFS. The second story of the hyphen contains a three-part replacement window set in an aluminum frame and surrounded by EIFS flat panels.

In terms of condition, the brick mortar is generally in good to fair condition. Some areas where the mortar has had greater exposure to moisture have begun to erode. The cast-stone details are noticeably soiled in places and are beginning to show signs of spalling. Some of the cast-stone details have been repointed with white mortar. In several locations, surface mounted conduit and

Booker T. Washington High School

Name of Property

Staunton, VA

County and State

pipings are in evidence. These exposed services have accumulated as the result of years of convenient solutions to incorporating new technology and systems into the building.

### **Interior: Plans**

Each floor of the building interior is organized along a double-loaded corridor. Originally there were stairs at either end, but the south stair was eliminated at the time of the 1960 addition to allow the corridor to be extended. The original stair at the entrance on the north end of the building remains and it features a painted metal guardrail with pickets and soapstone treads on the steps. The original architectural plans dated 1935 identify the use of each space/room in the original part of the school.

The first level contained the home economics room on the east side of the corridor just after coming into the main entrance. Next was a classroom, a small office, and the last space on the east side was the manual training room. The west side of the first floor corridor contained more utilitarian spaces including girls', boys' and teachers' restrooms along with a boys' shower room and the boiler room with an exterior door. A fuel room and a storage area were located under the second-floor gymnasium. On the upper level, four classrooms overlooked the east terraced lawn while the library and science room flanked the gymnasium on the west side of the corridor.

The gym has exits to the exterior off either side of the raised stage. The gymnasium and auditorium serve a variety of uses such as theater, athletics, and parties. It retains its original stage framed with paneled pilasters that support a classically designed entablature. Original stairs remain on the south end of the stage but the one on the north end has been modified to install a handicap access ramp.

The plan of the 1960 addition also contains a double-loaded corridor, although it is several feet lower than the corridor of the original school. The addition contains four classrooms on each level while the hyphen connection contains the east entrance staircase and a storage room on the west side of the corridor. An entrance on the south end of the 1960 addition provides access to a smaller parking area. An entrance on the west elevation of the 1960 addition was eliminated, possibly at the time of the renovations done for the police headquarters. A concrete pad remains attached to the building on the west elevation where a former storage shed was attached to the addition.

### **Interior: Finishes**

The corridors in the original section of the building have a wainscot of glazed concrete tile block with plaster above. The classrooms in the original section have plaster walls and ceilings. The wood trim in these rooms creates much of their historic character. In addition to the chair rail and wood base, the bulletin boards and blackboards are framed with painted wood trim. Each room features a closet combined with a built-in storage cabinet (which also conceals a ventilation shaft behind it).

The nine-light, single-panel classroom doors and three-light transom with the surrounding casing also contribute to the historic character of the corridors. The finishes on the second floor are in good condition. Many of the rooms have been recently painted and/or wallpapered and have new

Booker T. Washington High School

Staunton, VA

Name of Property

County and State

carpet or vinyl composition tile (VCT) flooring installed. The corridors have had new VCT installed on the floors. The second-floor restrooms have been updated with new fixtures and finishes. Some recent corrosion has occurred at the metal partitions in the men's room.

On the first floor, some of the original chair rail and baseboard, along with the built-in blackboards in these classrooms, have been removed over time. Several of the original built-in cabinet/closet combinations still exist in fair condition, as do some rows of lockers. Some spaces were divided into smaller rooms when the police department occupied this level. The finishes on the first floor are typically in fair condition. Vinyl asbestos tiles have been removed from the floor. While the previous police occupancy required some alterations, there is enough remaining original fabric to restore this level in the future if desired.

The glazed concrete block in the 1960 section of the building differs somewhat from that seen in the original section of the building. The corridors and classrooms in the new section have the concrete block wainscots. The ceilings consist of the exposed underside of the precast concrete double-T beams used for the floor and roof structure. On the first floor, this section has seen some damage, such as holes in the walls as a result of the holding cells installed as required for the police department and the subsequent removal of some of these alterations. The interior surface of the gypsum board, added as part of the window sash replacement, is finished but unpainted. A reception counter and window remain from the police occupancy in the hyphen entrance area of the first floor.

Much of the architectural integrity of the school remains although some aspects of the original design have been compromised or lost. The exterior of the building retains most of its integrity with the exception of the replaced window sash surrounded by the application of EIFS. The second level of the interior has a high degree of integrity with many classrooms still in largely original condition, as is the gymnasium. While the first level has suffered from more alterations, much original fabric and several original spaces remain and this level could be restored in the future.



Booker T. Washington High School  
Name of Property

Staunton, VA  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Booker T. Washington High School  
Name of Property

Staunton, VA  
County and State

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE: African American

SOCIAL HISTORY: Civil Rights

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1936-1966

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1936

1960

1966

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Long, Raymond, Architect

Neilson Construction Co., Builder

Smithy and Boynton, Architects for Addition/J.B. Wine & Sons, Contractor

Booker T. Washington High School  
Name of Property

Staunton, VA  
County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Booker T. Washington High School is locally significant under Criterion A for Education and Ethnic Heritage: African American for its association with the cultural and educational patterns that have made a significant contribution to the African American history of Staunton. It operated as the only African American high school in the Staunton area from 1936 to 1966. Outside of strictly educational functions, the building served as a public meeting space for the African American community during the era of segregation. The school is also a source of pride in the African American community for the supportive and formative role that it played in many individuals' lives. It was named for Booker Taliaferro Washington (April 5, 1856 - November 14, 1915), a man born into slavery, who later became a great American educator and civil rights leader.

Also locally significant under Criterion A in Social History, "the new high school gave the black community of Staunton, which had been denied access to public places for social activities, its own space to collectively organize and to hold fundraisers and other events."<sup>1</sup> Within weeks of the school's opening in late 1936, African American community groups were petitioning the Staunton School Board to use the space during non-school time. The interest was such that a fee structure for outside use had to be immediately established. During segregation, the school library also doubled as the community's public library, adult night classes were held at the school and adult recreational athletic teams used the gymnasium.<sup>2</sup> As the Civil Rights movement grew in the South, the school was used as the site of voter registration in March 1960, as reported in the school board minutes and the Staunton newspaper.

The Booker T. Washington High School is locally significant under Criterion C in Architecture as a notable example of a local school designed in the Art Deco style that retains much of its original fabric from its 1936 construction date. It is the only local school designed in this new aesthetic for its era and one of the very few buildings in the region that was executed in the Art Deco style, popular in the period between the two World Wars. The school was designed by Richmond architect Raymond V. Long who was the Supervisor of School Buildings for the State Department of Education when he executed this design. It is sited on a sloping 2.3-acre parcel and is surrounded by the West Johnson Street neighborhood that overlooks Staunton's historic downtown and the Blue Ridge Mountains beyond. The school's period of significance dates from 1936 when it was constructed through 1966 when it closed with the integration of the local school system.

---

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Booker T. Washington High School

Staunton, VA

Name of Property

County and State

From the end of the Civil War until the desegregation of Staunton Public Schools in 1966, there have been at least 13 African American schools in Staunton. Although the schools were funded at lower levels than the city's white schools, the quality of the African American education received by Staunton's students during that era produced a number of prominent educators as well as business and government leaders. Further, the reputation for providing a good education in Staunton was such that African American families living outside the city, in Augusta County and in Highland County, sent their children into Staunton to live and work in order to receive a better education.<sup>3</sup>

That was particularly true of junior high school and high school educational training that was absent in Augusta County until fairly late in the era of segregated schooling. Staunton, however, had two new African American schools, D. Webster Davis and Booker T. Washington (now the current Booker T. Washington Community Center), by World War I. They were located in the Sunnyside section of the city.

By the 1920s, the disparity between the educational infrastructure of Staunton's black and white schools was widening, and the parents and leaders in the African American community continued to push for better opportunities for their children. After a committee of parents requested that the school board provide industrial education classes and a four-year high school curriculum in the African American school, the request was granted provided the parents could raise the money for any extra equipment that would be needed.<sup>4</sup>

More and more efforts focused on improvements to the schools and in 1930 the Community League of the Colored Schools presented a petition that one or both of the black schools be enlarged. A receptive school board granted minor improvements, but the band-aid efforts were not enough. By late 1933, the problem of overcrowding at the schools was discussed.<sup>5</sup>

The tide shifted in January 1934 when the possibility presented itself for some federal funding through U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt's Civil Works Administration (CWA). The Great Depression-era stimulus program would provide two "colored" school projects and one white vocational training project. Over the next year, Staunton weighed the options now made possible by the potential of CWA funds. By 1935 the city was looking at options for a new black school building at a different site. As momentum built, the school board settled on a group of lots several blocks west of downtown Staunton on Richardson and Reservoir Streets near the C&O railroad.

In the spring, the school board requested that the city council make available \$12,000 to purchase the land. By 1959 the footprint for the Booker T. Washington School consisted of lots 74, 75, 76, 88, 90, 92, 94, and 95 of the Richardson Extension of the Bagby Plat, but this initial project required just four of those eight lots.<sup>6</sup>

Armed with a time limit on securing the CWA monies and an argument of potential "injustice to Negro children" if a new school was not built, the Staunton school board pushed the city council to move ahead on the project. If the CWA money was lost due to inaction, the city would not be able to afford a new African American school, warned the school board.<sup>7</sup>

Booker T. Washington High School  
Name of Property

Staunton, VA  
County and State

City Council unanimously voted to finance its portion of the project on October 21, 1935, and by the end of the month three lots had been procured in addition to the old reservoir lot that the City already owned off of West Johnson Street.<sup>8</sup>

### **Architectural Significance**

The Booker T. Washington High School is significant architecturally since it is a notable example of a local school designed in the Art Deco style that retains much of its original fabric from its 1936 construction date. It is the only local school designed in this new aesthetic for its era and one of the very few buildings in the region that was executed in the Art Deco style, popular in the period between the two World Wars.

The Art Deco style strove for modernity and was influenced by the Modern art movements. It also took ideas from the ancient geometrical design styles from Egypt and Persia. Art Deco designers used low relief designs, stepped forms and emphasized geometrical order and simple formats. Art Deco characteristics on the school can be seen in the decorative brick panels and the cast stone capitals. They reflect a design sophistication not found in local construction at the time and the result was a positive and proud architectural statement for the new black high school of Staunton.

The school was designed by Richmond architect Raymond V. Long who was the Supervisor of School Buildings for the State Department of Education when he executed this design. He designed public school buildings for Virginia from 1923 to 1937. *The Virginia Architects 1835-1955: A Biographical Dictionary* by John E. Wells and Robert E. Dalton lists 35 schools designed by Long during his time with the state, including a high school in Lexington in 1927 and an addition to the Bridgewater High School in 1930. The Booker T. Washington High School project in Staunton, however, is not among the list. According to the Staunton newspapers and the Staunton School Board minutes, however, he was clearly the architect.<sup>9</sup>

A review of several of Long's school designs in the Virginia Department of Education's Office of School Facilities Services revealed that he made a transition from a more classical Colonial Revival aesthetic to the Art Deco motifs from the early to mid-1930s. His design for the primary and elementary school in Winchester in 1930 was a sophisticated and correct classical design with semi-circular arched windows, an entrance capped with a broken pediment and an attractive cupola crowning the roof. His Bent Mountain School in Roanoke County in the same year continued his preference for the Colonial Revival with a gable-roofed central block flanked by two wings with parapet walls. These wings had no windows but Long added decorative brick panels in each with a diapering design.

In 1931, his design for the Sunnyside-McKinney School in Dinwiddie County continued the decorative brick panels but in this instance, he used a stacked brick arrangement similar to Booker T. Washington's panels. While the Dinwiddie school was one story, its exterior had other features similar to his Staunton design. The central entrance had Art Deco stylized fluted pilasters that were capped with a star-like circular panel and the overall bay was crowned with

Booker T. Washington High School

Staunton, VA

Name of Property

County and State

projecting molded Art Deco panels. The plan was similar to the Booker T. Washington example with a second entry at the end of the double-loaded corridor that was interrupted with a perpendicular auditorium wing projecting from the central part of the hall. Long's most sophisticated Art Deco design was for the 1935 George Washington High School in Alexandria with its elaborately carved panels at the entrance and cast stone projecting piers dividing each bay of the façade. It should be noted that although Long transitioned into a preference for the Art Deco in the 1930s, most of his designs were limited to exterior stylistic elements and the interiors continued to use standard materials and simple designs that related more to budget issues than aesthetic preferences.

In December 1935, Nielsen Construction in Harrisonburg was awarded the Booker T. Washington project but with \$4,343.50 removed in order to reduce costs. The most significant amount of reduction on the project was \$2,482 that was removed by eliminating the auditorium/gymnasium from the bid.

When word got out that this space was removed from the project, the city's African American parents appeared before the school board and petitioned the city to not cut corners, especially with the auditorium. In February a contract was signed and the auditorium was returned to the project.<sup>10</sup>

The school design and facilities were of a much higher quality than the old school. The new building included space for vocational training for boys and girls (manual training and home African American economics), a science room, a library, and a stage at one end of the auditorium/gymnasium. There was even a shower room for physical education and athletics.<sup>11</sup>

Work began immediately, but winter weather got the project off to a slow start. The other delaying factor was the fact that in construction, workers discovered that the old city reservoir was filled with junked car parts, bottles, and other trash. The instability of the reservoir was shored up with cement, but the delays meant that the school would not be ready to open at the start of the school year in September of 1936.<sup>12</sup>

As a result of the instability issues with the reservoir backfill, the October 1935 architectural drawings were revised on April 15, 1936, to include cement support under the auditorium floor where it spanned the old reservoir. In addition to the above factors, the steep slope of the site made work difficult as well, prompting one construction worker to state that the site was "one of the worst locations I ever worked on."<sup>13</sup>

A request for delay prompted an inspection by Architect Long and the federal authorities who then granted Nielsen an extension until the first of October to finish the project. That might have been somewhat optimistic, but the project was nearing the end in early October when the newspaper reported that "The structure is one that compares favorable with any in this city or any other city of like size. It is modern in every respect, constructed of the best of materials, and, to meet modern-day standards in the matter of lighting, heating, acoustics, etc." Ironically the part of the building that was lauded most by the newspaper was the auditorium that almost wasn't built. "Of particular interest is the large auditorium in the new school. Even the most

Booker T. Washington High School

Staunton, VA

Name of Property

County and State

casual test will convince the person inspecting the building that here at last is an auditorium in which the acoustics appear to be perfect. There is not the semblance of an echo, especial care having been taken in the use of materials...".<sup>14</sup>

The entire project cost \$75,000, \$30,000 from the federal government and the rest from the city of Staunton. The Staunton portion included \$6,600 to purchase the land. The school was designed to handle 200 pupils.<sup>15</sup> In the years between 1940 and 1950, Staunton's population almost doubled to nearly 20,000 people. Part of this increase was due to annexation and part was due to increased job opportunities. A rising population also meant more school age students. In 1950 there were 2,372 students in the city, 410 of whom were black.<sup>16</sup>

Schools, both black and white were again overcrowded throughout the 1950s and substantive improvements came in 1959 when a badly needed expansion was added to the Booker T. Washington School. The school board purchased four additional lots adjoining the school property and the architectural firm of Smithey and Boynton in Roanoke drew up plans for the building that was approved by the State Superintendent of School Buildings Construction in March of 1959.<sup>17</sup>

Late in the year, plans for the \$114,800 project were approved and the contractor was J. B. Wine & Sons. The project included a \$99,800 addition to the building that added at least four classrooms, additional equipment and lighting, new flooring, surfacing the play area, a new roof, refurbishing the restrooms, purchasing desks, grading, seeding, and painting at the old building, and the cost of architectural fees. By late January of 1960 the addition was ready for student occupancy and housed elementary school students.<sup>18</sup>

The opening of the beautiful, modern two-story brick building in 1936 meant more to the African American community than simply a new school. Perhaps author Laten Bechtel sums it up best in her book on the African American schools in Staunton and Augusta County. "The completion of BTW meant not only education opportunities for local African Americans in an environment conducive to learning. The new high school also gave the black community of Staunton, which had been denied access to places for social activities, their own space to collectively organize, discuss issues that impacted them, to hold fundraisers and other events."<sup>19</sup>

### **Other Community Functions**

Many of the requests for non-school events are recorded in the city's school board minutes. The first one on record came from the Ambassador's Club that wanted to rent the auditorium for a fashion show and a dance on March 26, 1937. The request for the show was granted, but the dance was denied. A rental rate of \$10 for charity and cultural groups and \$25 for businesses and political groups was established. Many groups would rent the space over the years.

The final say in which outside group was granted access to the building and which wasn't fell upon the school board although as the years progressed many of the decisions relating to community groups were handed over to the administration of the school that was headed up by principal Arthur Ware by 1950. Over the years some "more modern" music groups were denied

Booker T. Washington High School

Staunton, VA

Name of Property

County and State

permission to rent. Professional groups such as the Eighteenth Annual Convention of the Virginia State Association of Letter Carriers were allowed to meet in the auditorium. Mt. Zion Baptist Church was granted permission to present a musical in the space, but the Rev. T.J. Jemison, pastor of that same church, was denied permission to hold a dance. Other black groups that used the school over the years included the African American Boy Scout Troop, the VFW Auxiliary, and a club supporting a day nursery.

The school's student activities also drew the community together. Basketball games, played in the new auditorium, drew packed crowds. The black community had never before had an indoor space for sports activities. Even a local adult black basketball team practiced and played at BTW.<sup>20</sup>

The school's athletic teams gained a reputation state wide. In 1940 the basketball team captured the state championship and garnered a congratulatory letter from the Staunton school board. The Golden Eagles again captured the state basketball championship in 1961.<sup>21</sup>

Athletics was not the only service that the school provided to the greater African American community. In 1937, a small space in the elementary school was designated as library space for the community, which was denied access to the city's white library. When BTW opened in October, the new school's library was also designated as a "substation" of the city library for "colored patrons." To put this into perspective, the BTW library contained 763 books, while the white public library contained 11,430 volumes. The federal Works Progress Administration requested that the Booker T. Washington library be open two days a week for use by the greater African American community. The school board granted the federal request.<sup>22</sup>

Booker T. Washington was a school dedicated to shaping the best adults possible. One teacher remembers the high standard set by the administration and expected by the community in spite of the inequality of materials such as books and supplies between the black and the white schools.

"We didn't have a lot of things that we needed as teachers...probably didn't know that then...we just accepted what we had and did not know anything else. But we gave the students solid book learning and developed character and discipline. We taught character and values years before Dr. Martin Luther King. I said, stop talking about slavery...must go forward, you have a life to live. Use your brain and your hands. We gave them advice...watch and improve your integrity...admit it when you are wrong. Be dependable. Honor your parents...beware of the company you keep...respect your elders."<sup>23</sup>

Accreditation was important and the school gained and retained listing by the 1930s. In early 1940 the school board was told that to maintain Booker T's accreditation, it would need to have a certified librarian. Helen Burkes, the acting teacher-librarian, was offered a ten dollar a month salary increase if she would attend twelve weeks of summer school to be accredited, which she did.<sup>24</sup> In 1947 the school was again placed on the accredited list of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for the 1946-1947 school year, a fact that was celebrated in the community.



Booker T. Washington High School  
Name of Property

Staunton, VA  
County and State

In the surrounding county that still lacked a high school for black students, parents continued to send their children into the city for a better education. At Booker T. students could participate in science labs, serve on the school newspaper, join the science club, art club, drama club, library club, take business education classes, earn entrance into the honor society, be on the yearbook staff (*The Echo*), learn industrial arts and sewing, play musical instruments, sing in the chorus, and, of course, compete in athletics.<sup>25</sup>

“Parents encouraged you to go to school. They saw it as a way out,” remembered one graduate of Booker T. Washington. “Back then the only jobs were janitor and things like that. Then the factories came. Graduating was good because we had geometry and trigonometry and things like that. That gave us a plus for those things opening up like ASR (American Safety Razor), General Electric... that opened doors.”<sup>26</sup>

One of the most active clubs in the school was the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), a national organization of students enrolled in business classes. The idea of FBLA was launched at Columbia University of New York City in the 1937-1938 school year and had gone national by 1940. Chapter 448 at Staunton’s Booker T. Washington, formed in 1952, was probably the first African American FBLA organization in the state. In the 1962-1963 school year, Andrew A. Venable, Jr., from the Staunton chapter was elected as the Virginia Black FBLA President. As such, part of his duties required him to travel around Virginia to help set up new chapters. In March of 1963 he helped launch Chapter 2787, the new FBLA chapter at the brand new Augusta County African American High School known as Central Augusta High School.

Venable went on to earn a bachelor’s degree from Virginia State University in 1968 and a masters in library science in 1978 from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. He eventually became the Director of the Cleveland Public Library in 1999, a position that he held until his retirement in 2008.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to the normal high school curriculum at the school, the Veterans Bureau used the school as a venue to provide job training for veterans returning from war. In September 1951, a brick masonry class was taught at BTW that was funded by the federal government. Also in the 1950s a night typing class was offered. There is also evidence that an airplane mechanics class was offered.<sup>28</sup>

The first graduation at the new school occurred in 1937. By 1940, one of the groups requesting use of the school as a meeting space was the alumni association, an indication that the school continued to be the center of the community for Staunton’s African Americans even after graduation. Today the alumni continue to hold events at the school and maintain a history room.

Benefit events to help with community or school projects were often the subject of requests to use the school. In 1944, the Colored Parent-Teachers Association wanted to hold a subscription dance. Although the school board routinely denied requests for dances at the school, they granted

Booker T. Washington High School

Staunton, VA

Name of Property

County and State

an exception in this case, stating: "In view of the fact that this was a parent organization making the request, the request was granted provided the high school principal would be present to assume responsibility for the care of school property."<sup>29</sup>

By the early 1960s, the days of Jim Crow segregation were numbered in Staunton and the rest of the south. Despite the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision striking down school segregation, Virginia and its localities resisted the integration of its public schools. Five years after the court's decision, Staunton poured a large sum of money into the 1959 upgrade of Booker T. Washington with the intention of keeping it segregated. Nine years after the *Brown* decision, Augusta County opened a new African American high school and the Booker T. FBLA helped the new school launch its FBLA club.

But the end was near. The Civil Rights movement had come to Staunton. In March of 1960, a request was heard before the school board to use the school's auditorium for voter registration. The request was granted by the school board (with one abstention) and the lower civic fee of \$10 was charged.<sup>30</sup>

In 1966, Staunton's public schools were fully integrated. The administrators, teachers, coaches, and support staff at Booker T. Washington were absorbed into the now integrated Staunton public school system. Booker T. Washington High School was closed. Arthur Ware, the beloved teacher and then principal of Booker T. from 1950 until 1966, would go on to have a city school named for him. Ware was also an esteemed historian and helped document the African American community that had been his home for his entire life. Central to the entire community, and not just the educational community, from 1936 until 1966, had been the school upon the hill – Booker T. Washington School.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Laten Bechtel, *"That's Just The Way It Was": A Chronological and Documentary History of African-American Schools in Staunton and Augusta County* (Staunton, Va.: Lot's Wife Publishing, 2010), 114.

<sup>2</sup> Staunton School Board minutes 1935-66 (SSBM). Housed in the Staunton City Office Building, Staunton, Va.

<sup>3</sup> Bechtel.

<sup>4</sup> Bechtel, 108.

<sup>5</sup> Bechtel, 109.

<sup>6</sup> SSBM 1935.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> John E. Wells and Robert E. Dalton, *The Virginia Architects 1835-1955: A Biographical Dictionary* (Richmond, Va.: New South Architectural Press, 1997), 267-8; SSBM.

<sup>10</sup> SSBM 1935.

<sup>11</sup> Blueprints created by the Virginia Division of School Buildings, State Department of Education, Richmond, Va. for Staunton's African-American school, October 1935.

<sup>12</sup> SSBM; newspaper articles from the *Staunton News Leader*, 1935.

Booker T. Washington High School

Name of Property

Staunton, VA

County and State

- <sup>13</sup> State revised blueprints, 15 April 1936; *Staunton News Leader*, 4 June 1936.
- <sup>14</sup> *Staunton News Leader*, 6 October 1936; SSBM 1936.
- <sup>15</sup> SSBM 1935-36.
- <sup>16</sup> Bechtel, 138.
- <sup>17</sup> SSBM 1959.
- <sup>18</sup> Bechtel, 149; SSBM 1959-1960; *Staunton News Leader*, 1960.
- <sup>19</sup> Bechtel, 114.
- <sup>20</sup> Information about outside activities held at the school comes from the SSBM 1937-66.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Bechtel, 1144, 118; SSBM.
- <sup>23</sup> Bechtel, 130.
- <sup>24</sup> SSBM.
- <sup>25</sup> Booker T. Washington High School yearbooks.
- <sup>26</sup> Bechtel, 137.
- <sup>27</sup> Information about the FBLA and Venable comes from a large FBLA scrapbook housed in the BTW Alumni and History Room as well as the biographical information compiled by the original committee working on this nomination.
- <sup>28</sup> SSBM.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., 23 March 1960.

Booker T. Washington High School

Name of Property

Staunton, VA

County and State

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Bechtel, Laten (with assistance from Susie Brent King), *"That's Just The Way It Was": A Chronological and Documentary History of African-American Schools in Staunton and Augusta County* (Staunton, Va.: Lot's Wife Publishing, 2010). The authors researched and traced the history of African-American schooling in Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County from the end of the Civil War (1865) until the end of desegregation (1966). Their work includes numerous oral history interviews, research in yearbooks and school literature, extensive study of the minutes and other records of school boards and city councils, as well local newspapers.

Staunton School Board minutes, 1935-1966, housed in the Staunton City Office Building.

Various items in the Booker T. Washington Alumni and History Room including miscellaneous issues of the school yearbook, graduating class photographs, and scrapbooks, particular the FBLA scrapbook.

Numerous issues of the *Staunton News Leader* from 1934-1966. Microfilm at the Staunton Public Library.

Information from the Booker T. Washington High School Historical Landmark Committee that compiled the original preliminary register nomination in 2002. Committee members included Larry W. Vickers, BTW Community Center Facility Coordinator and alumnae; Edmund Potter, currently a professor of history at Mary Baldwin College; Karen Scott, a former English and French Teacher at BTW; Marguerite Johnson, alumnae; Virginia Perry, alumnae; Mae Porter Tate, publicist and alumnae; Jan Chase, Staunton School Board; and C. Deborah Richardson with the city of Staunton.

Wells, John E. and Robert E. Dalton, *The Virginia Architects 1835-1955: A Biographical Dictionary* (Richmond, Va.: New South Architectural Press, 1997), Long biography, 267-268.

Two sets of blueprints (October 1935 and revised 15 April 1936) from the Virginia Division of School Buildings, State Department of Education, Richmond, Va. Drawings are for Staunton's African-American school, which was named Booker T. Washington High School when it opened in the fall of 1936.

Booker T. Washington High School  
Name of Property

Staunton, VA  
County and State

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
☐ previously listed in the National Register  
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register  
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark  
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia;  
Booker T. Washington Community Center, Staunton, Virginia

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** VDHR File No. 132-5011

---

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 2.3 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 38.147281° | Longitude: -79.081640° |
| 2. Latitude:            | Longitude:             |
| 3. Latitude:            | Longitude:             |
| 4. Latitude:            | Longitude:             |

**Or**  
**UTM References**

Booker T. Washington High School  
Name of Property

Staunton, VA  
County and State

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the subject property is the same as the legal tax parcel number 9124 that was obtained from the City Assessor in his office along with the accompanying copy of the tax map.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

These boundaries were selected because they are the current legal boundaries of the former school property historically associated with the Booker T. Washington High School and encompass the historic setting and resources associated with the school.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: William T. Frazier & Nancy Sorrells  
organization: Frazier Associates, Architects & Planners  
street & number: 213 N. Augusta St.  
city or town: Staunton state: VA zip code: 24401  
e-mail: bfrazier@frazierassociates.com  
telephone: 540-886-6230  
date: 2/27/14

---

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Booker T. Washington High School

Staunton, VA

Name of Property

County and State

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

#### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Name of Property: Booker T. Washington High School

City or Vicinity: Staunton

County: N/A

State: VA

Photographer: William T. Frazier and Kathleen O. Frazier

Date Photographed: February 2014

Location of Original Files: DHR Archives

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view:

Photo 01 of 27: VA\_Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School\_\_0001

View: East elevation of school within neighborhood setting

Photo 02 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0002

View: East elevation showing 1960 addition and replaced windows

Photo 03 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0003

View: North elevation of façade and main entrance

Photo 04 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0004

View: East elevation of original section of school

Photo 05 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0005

View: East elevation of 1960 addition and side entrance

Photo 06 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0006

View: South and east elevations of 1960 addition

Booker T. Washington High School  
Name of Property

Staunton, VA  
County and State

Photo 07 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0007  
View: West elevation of original school section with west gym wing

Photo 08 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0008  
View: Lower parking lot and side entry steps on east side of site

Photo 09 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0009  
View: Basketball court on east side of site

Photo 10 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0010  
View: Parking lot on south end of site

Photo 11 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0011  
View: Main stair from entrance to second level

Photo 12 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0012  
View: Main hall of original school looking south

Photo 13 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0013  
View: Typical classroom door in original school section

Photo 14 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0014  
View: Interior of original library room looking south to private office

Photo 15 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0015  
View: Typical classroom space in original school section on second floor

Photo 16 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0016  
View: Gymnasium/auditorium looking west towards stage

Photo 17 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0017  
View: Main hall on second floor looking south to hall of 1960 addition

Photo 18 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0018  
View: Typical classroom on second level of 1960 addition

Photo 19 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0019  
View: Second floor hall of 1960 addition looking north

Photo 20 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0020  
View: Typical classroom door in 1960 addition

Photo 21 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0021  
View: Side entry stair to second level at intersection of addition to original section

Photo 22 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0022



Booker T. Washington High School  
Name of Property

Staunton, VA  
County and State

View: First floor hall of 1960 addition looking north

Photo 23 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0023

View: Typical former classroom of first floor of 1960 addition

Photo 24 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0024

View: First floor hall of original school section with built-in lockers

Photo 25 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0025

View: Undated historic photograph of north façade with students

Photo 26 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0026

View: Undated historic photograph of north façade and west elevation of original school

Photo 27 of 27: VA\_ Staunton\_Booker T. Washington High School \_\_0027

View: 1965 school yearbook photograph of east elevation of original school and 1960 addition, both with original windows